

## JOHN A. LEJEUNE, THE MARINE CORPS' GREATEST STRATEGIC LEADER

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2008

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE <b>15 MAR 2008</b>		2. REPORT TYPE <b>Strategy Research Project</b>		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2007 to 00-00-2008</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>John A. Lejeune, The Marine Corps' Greatest Strategic Leader</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) <b>James Dillon</b>				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>U.S. Army War College ,122 Forbes Ave.,Carlisle,PA,17013-5220</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <b>See attached</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>26</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

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# USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

## **JOHN A. LEJEUNE, THE MARINE CORPS' GREATEST STRATEGIC LEADER**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

AUTHOR: LtCol James T. Dillon USMC

TITLE: John A. Lejeune, the Marine Corps' Greatest Strategic Leader

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 25 March 2008      WORD COUNT: 5,322      PAGES: 26

KEY TERMS: Strategic Leadership, Commandant of the Marine Corps,  
Amphibious warfare, Expeditionary warfare

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

LtGen John Archer Lejeune served as the 13th Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps and guided the Corps through the very turbulent period of the 1920s. This was a time of tremendous challenges for the Armed Forces of the United States as the country, following the aftermath of the war to end all wars, craved a return to normalcy and economic prosperity. As a result the military was faced with personnel cutbacks and small budgets.

In this environment, and during his tenure as Commandant, General Lejeune would make visionary decisions that not only changed the culture of the Marine Corps, but would also lay the foundation for the development of amphibious warfare that set the groundwork for the successes enjoyed during World War II and beyond. His far reaching actions are still felt in the Marine Corps today.

This paper will analyze these major decisions using the strategic leader competencies found in the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Leadership Primer and show the incredible talent possessed by General Lejeune that truly makes him one of the Marine Corps' greatest Strategic leaders.



## JOHN A. LEJEUNE, THE MARINE CORPS' GREATEST STRATEGIC LEADER

In the turbulent decade following World War I, the United States Marine Corps faced many difficult challenges that not only threatened its very structure and mission but its value as a military service. Fortunately, Major General John Archer Lejeune was at the helm as the Commandant – an officer who would emerge as one of the Corps' great leaders. His actions and decisions set in motion long lasting changes that not only shaped the Corps of his day but still define the culture and mission of the Marine Corps today. His skills were so exceptional that the Marine Corps was the only military service that actually grew in size during the 1920s; a decade marked by thriftiness in government spending as well as significant military cutbacks. The expeditionary nature of the Corps, which today forms one of the eight core competencies found in *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, can be directly linked to Lejeune. The Marine Corps Officer Schools at Quantico, Virginia, as well as the Marine Corps Institute, a correspondence school for the education of enlisted personnel, were both created by Lejeune. These are remarkable accomplishments for any individual, and when taken in their entirety it is easy to see that Lejeune was a truly great leader. But how was Lejeune able to accomplish so much in light of his challenging environment? This paper will show that Lejeune rose to such greatness because he exhibited three vital strategic leadership competencies that enabled him to effectively lead the Marine Corps through these difficult times while establishing a legacy that endures to this day.

Leading large organizations, such as the Marine Corps, requires certain kinds of skills and competencies, possession of these, let alone mastery, is not always inherent in those senior leaders chosen for these tasks. The U.S. Army War College has made



an excellent effort to capture and explain these skill sets and competencies in its publication entitled the *Strategic Leadership Primer, 2d edition*. We will examine some of Lejeune's major decisions and contributions, particularly while he served as Commandant, using the lens of three of the strategic leader competencies listed in this *Primer*. The three competencies we will use are: envisioning the future; communication; and political and social competence. These three competencies were chosen because when possessed and harmonized together by the strategic leader, they will unquestionably provide the impetus for moving any organization to great heights. In the end though, we will show how Lejeune laid out a compelling vision for the Corps and through persuasive, prolific communications and social and political astuteness was able to ultimately achieve his vision. Examining Lejeune's decisions and contributions using these three strategic leadership competencies as a measuring tool will give us a better appreciation of why Lejeune is considered such a great strategic leader. Before we proceed with our analysis though, we must provide some context for his contributions and decisions. To do this, we will take a broad look at Lejeune's career and the political and social environment of the 1920s.

#### Background: Lejeune's Career and the 1920s

Strategic leaders are shaped by the aggregation of past experiences. What is important, though, is how they use those experiences in the daily application of strategic leadership. Lejeune had what typified a normal career for a Marine officer of his day, deriving important leadership lessons along the way that he employed to great success. He also made important personal contacts as he created a network of friends and acquaintances that he used throughout his career.

Lejeune was born at Pointe Coupee, Louisiana on 10 January 1867. His father, along with three of his maternal uncles, served with the Confederate Army of Tennessee.<sup>1</sup> Lejeune entered Louisiana State University in 1881, a military school at that time.<sup>2</sup> Lejeune entered the Naval Academy in 1884 and would graduate with the class of 1888. His time at the Academy proved to be a very formative period in his life. Many important colleagues, such as future Secretary of the Navy, Curtis D. Wilbur (1924-1929), and Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Charles F. Hughes (1927-1930), were classmates. He learned many important leadership lessons at the Academy that later influenced him as Commandant.<sup>3</sup> Lejeune's first assignment was aboard the 1,500 ton steam corvette *USS Vandalia*.<sup>4</sup> After the *Vandalia*, he went on to serve multiple tours at various Marine Barracks as well as many tours at sea commanding Marine Detachments. Lejeune participated in the Spanish American war while onboard the *USS Cincinnati*, a protected cruiser, receiving noteworthy comments for his display of "marked courage under fire" while commanding a gun division onboard.<sup>5</sup> He also commanded a battalion of Marines on the Isthmus of Panama during the Panamanian revolution of 1903.<sup>6</sup> From 1908 to 1909, while in the Philippines, Lejeune commanded a brigade of Marines. In 1909, he attended the U.S. Army War College receiving high praise from the War College's President, Brigadier General Wotherspoon.<sup>7</sup> As a Colonel, Lejeune commanded a Regiment that participated in the advance base maneuvers of 1914 on the island of Culebra, Puerto Rico as well as in the Vera Cruz operations in Mexico. Following this assignment in 1915, he served as assistant to the Major General Commandant until 1918. From 1918 to 1919 Lejeune served in France where he commanded the 64<sup>th</sup> Army Brigade of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division, the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine

Brigade, and the Army's Second Division, becoming the first Marine General to command a division in combat.

In addition to relying on the sum of his experiences, a strategic leader must understand his surroundings and be able to adroitly maneuver through his environment to be successful. The 1920s presented senior military leaders with many difficult challenges. The military remained engaged across the globe protecting United States interests from the Philippines to the Caribbean, while Japan loomed ominously as a potential future threat. As the United States emerged from the Great War, however, the country looked forward to a growing prosperity and a return to its previous way of life. The year 1920, an election year, ushered in a new administration. Republican Warren G. Harding came to office with a promise of returning to normalcy.<sup>8</sup> This return to normalcy would see the American people reject the League of Nations, move to isolationism, and bring on disarmament. Although the “Roaring Twenties” was a period of tremendous industrial growth, consumer demand, and social change, all three presidential administrations of the decade pursued a policy of cutting costs in government. As a result, the military would see significant personnel and equipment cutbacks and reductions in military spending.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the military treaties that defined this period, the Washington Naval Treaty (ratified in 1922) and the Kellogg-Briand Pact (signed in 1928), were primarily designed to restrict growth of the world's great powers (and therefore reduce expenditures). The Washington Naval Treaty limited the tonnage of capital ships between the major world powers of the day; Great Britain, the United States, Japan, France, and Italy as well as specifying limitations on the

fortification of Pacific Ocean possessions. The Kellogg-Briand Pact, signed by most of the world's nations, renounced war as an instrument of national policy.

An unintended, but positive, consequence of the government policy of cost reductions and cutbacks was that it created an environment of military experimentation and innovation that would have tremendous value in the decades ahead.<sup>10</sup> Many innovative concepts were developed during this time that had a direct bearing on the conduct of the next World War. Concepts such as the role of Army aviation, led by Billy Mitchell, set in motion the Army Air Corps' focus on strategic bombing. In 1922, the Navy began to earnestly develop its naval aviation arm, creating its first aircraft carrier, the *USS Langley*. In addition to these developments, beginning in 1923, both the U.S. Army War College and Naval War College assisted the Joint Army-Navy Board in a continuous series of war games based on War Plan ORANGE, the plan for war with Japan. The Naval War College also conducted a series of tactical and strategic war games that highlighted the importance of carrier based aircraft.<sup>11</sup> So despite the tighter military budget and commitments overseas, for the military, the 1920s was a period of innovation that prepared it for the challenges of World War II. Focus also increasingly shifted to viewing Japan as the most probable threat the United States faced in the Pacific - a threat that was predominantly naval in character.<sup>12</sup> This atmosphere of military cutbacks, disarmament treaties, military innovation, and focus on the looming naval conflict with Japan certainly influenced Lejeune's actions and views while he served as Commandant. With this context in mind, let us now begin our examination of Lejeune's strategic leadership ability using the three competencies mentioned previously.

## Lejeune: The Strategic Leader

Now that we have a better appreciation of Lejeune's background and the environment as he assumed the responsibilities of Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps, let us look at his role as a strategic leader. As mentioned previously, strategic leaders are an aggregation of their experience and a product of their environment. It is what they do with this experience and how they maneuver through their environment that sets them apart. Possession of certain strategic leadership competencies aids them in the successful execution of their duties. The strategic leader often makes decisions and directs actions where the eventual outcome is unknown and uncertain. In the face of changing public attitudes, changes in governments, influences of congress, national budgets, evolutions of new missions, and the dynamics of the international order, as the *Strategic Leadership Primer* (hereafter referred to as the *Primer*) indicates, "the only constant in the strategic environment is the continuous acceleration of the rate of change, which gives rise to greater uncertainties."<sup>13</sup>

We will now analyze Lejeune's contributions and decisions using the lens of three of the strategic leader competencies mentioned earlier in this paper. To recap, they are envisioning the future, communication, and political and social competence. This triad of competencies, when exhibited by the strategic leader and harmonized in their employment will provide the greatest impact on an organization. Vision sets the course, communication conveys the vision to all interested parties, and being politically and socially adept ensures the realization of the vision by providing the means to influence the environment. The extent to which these three competencies are harmonized is critical to gauging the success of a strategic leader. If the vision is relevant, achievable,

and inspirational; energetically and regularly communicated; and the social and political environment worked to achieve it, then enduring change is possible. Lejeune did all of this very successfully.

### Envisioning the Future

The competency of envisioning the future is the cornerstone on which the other competencies must be built for the strategic leader to attain greatness. The *Primer* explains that envisioning the future is the “capability to formulate and articulate strategic aims and key concepts.”<sup>14</sup> It also involves the capacity to work proactively to shape the future to enhance goal attainment. The concept of vision is an important aspect of envisioning the future. This concept of vision, according to the *Primer*, includes a desired end state which describes the organization as it should to be given the expected future environment. Further, the desired end state serves as a goal for the organization to strive for but not one that is necessarily expected to be achieved in its entirety. The vision provides direction, purpose, and identity.<sup>15</sup> Lejeune’s vision certainly exhibited these characteristics as we will see. As we explore Lejeune’s use of envisioning the future, it is important to point out that concepts such as vision were not regular topics in the 1920s, therefore there were no documents that clearly indicated Lejeune’s vision. With this in mind, we have discerned essentially two elements to Lejeune’s vision that meet the above definition. The first element was his view of the primary mission of the Marine Corps. The second element is what he referred to as his guiding principles for the Corps. These were essentially his views of what the Marine Corps should be in order to execute its primary mission. Both of these elements are inextricably linked as we will show. Because one element of his vision was the primary mission of the Corps

and the second element was his view of the force required to execute this mission, both elements together formed a goal that provided direction, purpose, and identity to the Marine Corps. Additionally, since vision forms the cornerstone of the other competencies, our analysis of Lejeune's use of both communication and political and social competence will be made in reference to how they were used to further his vision.

The first element of Lejeune's vision was what he viewed as preparing for the Corps' primary mission (Lejeune referred to this as the Corps' true mission). This mission was the Marine Corps as the expeditionary force of the Navy. In spite of the great successes of the Marine Corps serving on land with the Army during World War I, Lejeune saw the Marine Corps' future vital role as being the expeditionary arm of the fleet. He also saw that the Corps was naturally bound to the Navy and felt that the only way to ensure the future of the Corps was to make it efficient and useful to the Navy in the area of expeditionary service ashore in support of the fleet.<sup>16</sup>

The idea of the Marine Corps being the expeditionary arm of the Navy was not new for Lejeune. In his memoirs, he mentions that the idea first came to him while serving aboard the *USS Cincinnati* in 1897. He thought that Marines serving aboard ships were not a shipboard police force. Their usefulness lay in their ability to provide the Navy with an efficient expeditionary force, accustomed to life at sea, and associated with the Navy.<sup>17</sup> He felt that if the Marine Corps were not efficient or economical, then it could not offer the Navy anything it could not find with the Army. If this became the case, the mission would pass to stronger and more capable hands and the Corps would cease to exist.<sup>18</sup> "On the other hand," Lejeune stated, "if by dint of united, industrious, intelligent, and conscientious performance of duty the efficiency of the Corps be

increased and become manifest to all, its future development and growth will be assured.”<sup>19</sup>

Early in his Commandancy, Lejeune laid out the second element of his vision, which he referred to as the three guiding principles for the Corps. These consisted of: 1) administer the affairs of the Marine Corps economically and efficiently; 2) make the Marine Corps as useful as possible to the Government and to the people of the United States in peace as well as war; and 3) make the Marine Corps the finest military organization in the world. This second element of his vision was presented in an address delivered to his officers at the Marine Corps Schools in Quantico, Virginia on 12 January 1922<sup>20</sup> and also formally presented during his testimony to the House Committee for Naval Affairs on 8 March 1922.<sup>21</sup> This vision provided the momentum for many changes and also determined the direction the Marine Corps would take during and after Lejeune’s Commandancy.

What is remarkable about Lejeune’s realization as to the Corps’ primary mission is that this mission was inextricably tied to his three guiding principles. The mission was the focal point of his guiding principles. Both elements of his vision together defined a desired end state by combining a natural mission for the Corps with the kind of force required to execute it. The Marine Corps needed to be an efficient force, useful to the nation, and the finest military organization in the world if it was to successfully seize and defend advanced naval bases in support of the fleet. These two elements of his vision complemented each other perfectly and formed the engine that fired many of the changes the Corps would experience over the following decades. With a vision



established, Lejeune used his communications skills to ensure his Corps and all interested parties clearly understood where the Marine Corps was heading.

### Communication

The competency of communication is the means through which the vision is projected throughout the organization. If the strategic leader can not effectively communicate the vision, then it will never be fully realized. The *Primer* states that “effective communication within the organization is important to changing, or even maintaining, direction or policy.” The *Primer* also mentions “when leaders attempt change through policy, regulation, or vision, their communications are interpreted at every level.”<sup>22</sup> It is so important in military organizations for leaders at all levels to be seen and heard and it is through effective and clear communications that senior leaders are able to exercise influence and leadership. The strategic leader must be a master of communication to be truly effective. We will now look at how Lejeune used the communication competency to not only develop his vision but to also convey it throughout the Corps. He was a master communicator who used all available means to communicate with his audiences. We will look at how he used periodicals, speeches, and letters to communicate his message.

Lejeune certainly made effective use of military periodicals of his day to get his message out. Examination of the archives of the *Marine Corps Gazette* and *Leatherneck Magazine* reveals countless articles and columns authored by Lejeune as well as directives and guidance from him. Interestingly, Lejeune helped create the *Marine Corps Gazette* in 1916<sup>23</sup> as well as the *Leatherneck Magazine* in 1925 from a Quantico newspaper of the same name.<sup>24</sup> He recognized the value in sharing his

thoughts with a greater audience as it would not only convey his views but also stimulate thinking by others. One such article that highlights Lejeune's logical articulation of his realization of the essential role of the Marine Corps can be found in the inaugural *Marine Corps Gazette* of March 1916. In this article, he examined the strategic environment of the United States using sound military logic and mission analysis. He presented the argument that since the United States was a great naval power it would require an expeditionary force, associated with the Navy, to seize and hold ports from which the Army would then be able to prosecute a land campaign.<sup>25</sup> Many directives were also published in either the *Gazette* or *Leatherneck Magazine* associated with his vision.

Lejeune was known to be an eloquent speaker and he certainly took every opportunity to use this medium to articulate his vision. In an address he delivered at the Naval War College on 14 December 1923, he reinforced his thoughts on the expeditionary mission of the Marine Corps as well as provided insights to his thinking on his vision. His logic was that the expeditionary mission of the Marine Corps was the natural mission for the Corps because of its land combat capability and naval character. This natural mission then made the Corps very useful to the nation as it contributed to ensuring the country's maritime preeminence. If the Marine Corps were to retain this mission, it would have to remain an efficient and economical force with connections to the Navy. Further, because of the nature of this mission, the Marine Corps had to be a mobile, flexible force in a constant state of preparedness.<sup>26</sup> Evidence of his ability to eloquently articulate the themes of his vision can also be found in his March 1921 testimony before the Sub-committee of the House Committee on Appropriations on the

Naval Appropriations Bill of 1922 as well as his March 1922 testimony before the House Committee on Naval Affairs.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, in order to communicate to the nation the Marine Corps' expeditionary nature, Lejeune would rename the Corps' existing Advanced Base Regiments to the East and West Coast Expeditionary Forces. It is relevant to point out that the Marine Corps still has both an east and west coast expeditionary force in the form of the Second and First Marine Expeditionary Forces respectively.

Lejeune proved extremely adept at communicating the elements of his vision by means of countless letters and other correspondence. Of particular note was his communications with the General Board of the Army and Navy that resulted in the 1927 publication of *Joint Action of the Army and Navy* that formally assigned the Marine Corps the mission of "land operations in support of the fleet for the initial seizure and defense of advanced bases."<sup>28</sup> These particular communications were the result of Lejeune's astute analysis of the Washington Naval Treaty. Lejeune logically deduced that while the treaty may have restricted the means in which navies waged war on the sea, it did not restrict the size of mobile forces held in readiness in support of the fleet.<sup>29</sup>

Other correspondence and communications from Lejeune focused on the Corps being an efficient and economical force, an important aspect of his three guiding principles. Within the fiscal conditions of the twenties, he would never have been able to make the Corps relevant, let alone successful, if he did not endeavor to make the Marine Corps more economical and efficient than the Navy and Army. The same month he became Commandant, July of 1920, he issued Marine Corps Order Number 24 with the subject of Military Efficiency. This order laid out his expectations to the Corps and

required all officers to promote economy and efficiency in their jurisdictions.<sup>30</sup> By showing that the Corps was an efficient and economical force, capable of living within the bounds of the budget, while remaining successful, Lejeune would be able to ensure the Corps remained useful to the nation. In 1925, Lejeune sent a memorandum to the Secretary of the Navy outlining that the Corps had expended, in Fiscal Year 1925, \$15 million less than in Fiscal Year 1920 while increasing its efficiency,<sup>31</sup> an incredible accomplishment. As we can see, Lejeune effectively used communications to change his organization and move it in the direction of his vision. But, communications alone would not lead to lasting success. Lejeune would have to use his all of his political and social competence skills to ultimately achieve his vision.

### Political and Social Competence

Political and social competence, according to the *Primer*, is the ability to participate effectively in the interdepartmental process necessary for security policy formulation and execution. It also includes the capacity for interacting with the legislative branch of government. This competency is also necessary for effectively advising national leaders in developing the policy, preparing the strategy, and securing the resources to implement the strategy. Without this skill, strategic leaders cannot fully achieve their vision. This is because military organizations are intrinsically dependent on the legislative and executive branches of government for adequate funding and assignment of appropriate missions; other military services for proper delineation of roles and responsibilities; and the American public to ensure they remain viable. Lejeune clearly understood this. He effectively used his political and social competence to communicate his vision to the three elements mentioned above. Therefore, our

analysis of Lejeune will focus on how he used this competency in the political, military, and civil realm.

Lejeune was extremely adept at operating in the political arena. He successfully built and maintained important relationships within the government in order to set the conditions to achieve his vision. As he mentioned in his memoirs “I also kept in close contact with Members of Congress, especially members of the Committees having jurisdiction over Marine Corps legislation and appropriations, and established and maintained friendly relations with the officials of the White House, the State, War and Navy Departments, the Cabinet,...the Diplomatic Corps...” as well as numerous veteran’s and other social organizations.<sup>32</sup>

The biggest challenge Lejeune faced to giving his vision a chance of success was obtaining adequate funding and maintaining adequate force levels to support deployments to Haiti, Nicaragua, the Philippines, and China as well as for his wartime mission of being the Navy’s expeditionary force. The greatest proof of his ability to successfully work within the political arena to achieve his goals lies in comparing the personnel end strengths of the Marine Corps, Navy, and Army during Lejeune’s tenure as Commandant. In 1920 the Corps consisted of 17,165 officers and men. In 1929 when he left office the Corps had 18,800 officers and men.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, in 1920 the Army had a total of 204,000 officers and men and by 1929 only had 139,000.<sup>34</sup> The Navy in 1920 had 121,800 and by 1929 only had 97,100 officers and men.<sup>35</sup> The fact that the Corps actually grew 10% in numbers while the Army and Navy lost 32% and 20% men respectively was an astonishing accomplishment and testimony to Lejeune’s

political and social competence. But this was not all he did that demonstrated his political and social competence.

In spite of the demands placed on his Corps through extensive overseas commitments, Lejeune demonstrated the Corps' efficiency and usefulness by conducting training exercises with the East Coast Expeditionary Force over four successive summers and two advanced base exercises with the fleet over two consecutive winters. Lejeune invited the President of the United States as well as other dignitaries to attend these exercises. President Harding attended twice, once in 1921 and again in 1922.<sup>36</sup> Having the President attend these events certainly highlighted Lejeune's political and social astuteness and went a long way in reinforcing the Corps' usefulness and efficiency to key political and civil leaders.

Lejeune made numerous friends and acquaintances throughout his career with members of the other services. These contacts served him well while he was Commandant. As mentioned previously, Secretary of the Navy, Curtis D. Wilbur and Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Charles F. Hughes were his classmates at the Naval Academy. While attending the U.S. Army War College he made many Army officer friends such as Hunter Liggett, Fox Connor, and Malin Craig who proved to be valuable contacts later in his career. Hunter Liggett, for example, commanded the American Expeditionary Force's (AEF) First Army in France while Fox Connor, who was said to have shaped George C. Marshall's and Dwight Eisenhower's approach to warfare,<sup>37</sup> served as General Pershing's (Commander of the AEF) Chief of Operations or G-3. Malin Craig, served as Hunter Liggett's Chief of Staff during the war and would later become the Chief of Staff of the Army from 1935 to 1939 succeeding Douglas MacArthur

and preceding George C. Marshall in that capacity. Lejeune was also well acquainted with two Army Chiefs of Staff during his time as Commandant. General Pershing who was Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces served as the Army's Chief of Staff from July 1921 to September 1924. General Charles P. Summerall, who was Lejeune's Corps Commander in France, served as the Army's Chief of Staff from November 1926 to November 1930. Lejeune certainly made use of these important contacts in the pursuit of his vision.

Lejeune also recognized that his ability to make the Marine Corps useful to the American people meant carrying his message directly to them. As Lejeune stated "the American people, and therefore Members of Congress, are apt to believe that the officers and men of the military and naval establishment are tax-eaters and non-producers; that their time is spent in idleness. This belief we must combat by engaging in useful work."<sup>38</sup> He was extremely proficient at interacting with the civilian sector in this regard. Lejeune created the Marine Corps League in 1923 for the purpose of promoting the interests and preserving the traditions of the Marine Corps.<sup>39</sup> There are also countless examples of successful speaking engagements at civilian functions located in Lejeune's personal papers collection at the Marine Corps University Archives and the Marine Corps Historical Division. Additionally, he was actively involved with many other civil organizations such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Gridiron Club, the Second Division Association, and the Masonic Order.<sup>40</sup> It is clear that Lejeune understood the importance to staying engaged with the public in order to promote his vision. If the civil sector supported the Marine Corps, then that would carry over to their

elected representatives who would be compelled to keep the Marine Corps a viable organization.

### Conclusion

General Lejeune lived during a transitional time of our history. He could have merely focused on the myriad of issues that were impacting the military of his day, such as the Marine Corps commitments in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and China, and on keeping the Marine Corps adequately resourced to meet these requirements. He certainly had a very vocal and powerful element within his senior officer ranks, such as Brigadier General Smedley Butler, who would have been happy with a Commandant who focused on these traditional missions of the Corps. If he had, he would still have been remembered as a good steward of the Corps during a challenging period. Instead, Lejeune chose to see his role as Commandant differently and seek a better future for his Corps. He chose to take advantage of this transitional period and transform the Corps into the premier expeditionary force we know it to be today. In so doing, he is remembered as a great Commandant.

As this paper has shown, what set Lejeune apart and made him such a great strategic leader was the profoundness of his vision, his ability to eloquently and prolifically communicate that vision, and his political and social astuteness in overcoming obstacles to achieving his vision. He perfectly harmonized the three competencies of envisioning the future, communication, and political and social astuteness so that his vision resonated throughout the Corps and our country. Furthermore, he did not limit himself to just envisioning an expeditionary force seizing advanced naval bases in the Pacific, which in itself was quite revolutionary for his day.



The genius of his vision lay with the fact that he not only defined the primary mission of the Marine Corps, but that he tied it to the kind of force necessary to successfully execute this mission. The combination of these two elements, both innovative concepts, would have the most enduring impact on the culture of the Marine Corps.

Proof of the success of his Commandancy was not only evident in 1929 when he left office, but would certainly be evident in the decades following. The Marines of the 1930s made his vision of a highly prepared and efficient expeditionary force a reality with their innovative development of the amphibious warfare doctrine that would determine victory in World War II.

Lejeune, through his prolific communications and political astuteness, created an institution focused on creating the force necessary to execute this new mission of the Corps. His efforts to make the Corps more efficient and economical created a mindset within the Corps of doing more with less - a key ethos required of an expeditionary force. His annual exercises and fleet maneuvers created a well trained and disciplined force eager to prove itself. Demonstrating the prowess of this force to top national leaders reinforced in their minds the elite nature of the Corps and its usefulness to the nation. At every opportunity, Lejeune communicated through speeches, articles, and other correspondence all the great things the Corps did as well as his expectations for the force in the future. In the end, all of his efforts created a highly efficient and useful elite expeditionary force just as he had envisioned. His legacy was the amphibious Marine Corps of World War II. Lieutenant General Victor Krulak in his book *First to Fight* credits Lejeune as being a visionary who perceived the need for securing base facilities in the immense Pacific Ocean as well as a prescient pioneer of amphibious doctrine.<sup>41</sup>

John Archer Lejeune was truly a great leader and Marine. His countless contributions to the Marine Corps have made it the elite organization that it is today. We, who are Marines, owe him a debt of gratitude and those of us who aspire to become senior leaders can gain much by studying this great American.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Major General John A. Lejeune, *Reminiscences of a Marine* (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1930; reprint, Quantico, Virginia: The Marine Corps Association, 1979), 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 32. It was at Louisiana State University that Lejeune learned the rudiments of military life as well as the great advantages gained from physical training, discipline, the habits of military obedience, and military command.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 48. Lejeune later commented that he observed little favoritism while at the Naval Academy and class standing was based on ability. This probably began his thinking on fairness as a leadership trait and influenced his attempt to change the officer promotion system to one based on merit vice seniority when he became Commandant. He was also impressed by the Executive Officer of the ship on which he served during his First Class cruise. He felt that this officer was just and fair in his dealings with the midshipman. We see this theme re-occur in Lejeune's writings on leadership while he was Commandant. One complaint he had about the school was that it impressed him as a great machine that lacked human appeal. He mentions in his memoirs that only once during his four years was his class addressed by an officer and that the midshipmen would have greatly benefitted from more exposure to the example of commissioned officers. Again, we see this same theme manifest itself later in his career.

<sup>4</sup> Colonel John A. Lejeune, biography undated, Personal Papers Collection, Marine Corps University Archives, Quantico, Virginia. Unlike today at the Naval Academy, where a midshipman is commissioned into the Navy or Marine Corps at graduation, in 1888 upon graduation, midshipmen had to complete a two year assignment with the fleet to determine their fitness for commissioning. Lejeune did his obligatory two year cruise onboard the USS Vandalia, a 1,500 ton steam corvette, which was to be involved in the growing crisis over the Samoan Islands. During this cruise he would endure a violent hurricane that sunk the Vandalia in Apia Harbor, Samoa. In the resulting ordeal he would receive praise from his Commanding Officer for his gallant conduct and display of coolness and zeal.

<sup>5</sup> Colonel John A. Lejeune, biography undated.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Lejeune received commendatory comments for his performance in Panama from the Admiral commanding the operation, the U.S. Governor of Panama, as well as the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

<sup>7</sup> Brigadier W.W. Wotherspoon, letter to Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps 31 October 1910, Lejeune Papers Collection, Army Heritage and Education Center Archives, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Brigadier General Wotherspoon wrote to the Commandant of the

Marine Corps that Lejeune was an “efficient and capable officer” who displayed “marked ability and a high order of military intelligence in the work of the College course”. Wotherspoon also considered Lejeune fit for high command.

<sup>8</sup> American Leaders Speak, “The Presidential Election of 1920,” available from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/nfhhtml/nfexpe.html>; Internet; accessed 16 December 2007. Normalcy was a campaign slogan Harding used that signified returning the country to the way life was before President Wilson’s idealism.

<sup>9</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth J. Clifford USMCR, *Progress and Purpose: A Developmental History of the United States Marine Corps 1900-1970* (Washington D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1973), 26.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Henry H. Shelton, “Professional Education: The Key to Transformation,” *Parameters*, Autumn 2001 [journal on-line]; available from <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/parameters/01autumn/shelton.htm>; Internet; accessed 16 December 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Louis Morton, “Germany First: The Basic Concept of Allied Strategy in World War II,” in *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1960), 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>16</sup> Lejeune, *Reminiscences of a Marine*, 115.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 115-116.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 116.

<sup>20</sup> John A. Lejeune historical file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, Virginia. This speech to Marine Officers at Quantico outlining his three guiding principles is also found in the March 1922 issue of the Marine Corps Gazette.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Naval Affairs, *Statements of Maj Gen John A. Lejeune, Commandant United States Marine Corps; Accompanied by Brig Gen Charles L. McCawley, Quartermaster; Maj L.C. Shepherd; Lieut. Col H.C. Snyder; and Mr W.W. Trail*, 8 March 1922, 644.

<sup>22</sup> *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 42.

<sup>23</sup> "The Marine Corps Association. Its Formation and Objects", *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 1916 [journal on-line]; available from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=523498771&sid=1&fmt=4&clientId=72642&rqt=309&vname=pqd>; Internet; accessed 5 December 2007.

<sup>24</sup> "The Leatherneck Legacy," *Leatherneck Magazine* [journal on-line]; available from <http://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/about.asp>; Internet; accessed 13 February 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Colonel John A. Lejeune, "The Mobile Defense of Advance Bases by the Marine Corps", *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 1916 [journal on-line]; ]; available from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=523498771&sid=1&fmt=4&clientId=72642&rqt=309&vname=pqd>; Internet; accessed 5 December 2007.

<sup>26</sup> "The United States Marine Corps", *Marine Corps Gazette*, December 1923 [journal on-line]; available from [http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/mca-members/access/536027241.html?dids=536027241:536027241:536027241&FMT=PAGE&FMTS=ABS:FT:PAGE&type=current&date=Dec+1923&author=John+A+Lejeune&pub=Marine+Corps+Gazette+\(pre-1994\)&edition=&startpage=243&desc=the+united+states+marine+corps](http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/mca-members/access/536027241.html?dids=536027241:536027241:536027241&FMT=PAGE&FMTS=ABS:FT:PAGE&type=current&date=Dec+1923&author=John+A+Lejeune&pub=Marine+Corps+Gazette+(pre-1994)&edition=&startpage=243&desc=the+united+states+marine+corps).

<sup>27</sup> In the March 1921 testimony with the House Sub-Committee on Appropriations on the Naval Appropriation Bill of 1922, Lejeune articulates the Corps' mission and required end strength to accomplish that mission. He also stresses the need for the country to always have a force ready to respond to any emergency. The following exchange between Lejeune and the sub-committee Chairman, Mr Kelley is a great example of how Lejeune links the expeditionary mission of the Corps to the required end strength needed and to being a vital interest to the Nation. "Our fleets, therefore, must be ready to form the protecting bulwark behind which our great armies can be organized and trained. I think this is sound. In a naval war the Marine Corps will accompany and be part of the fleet. It must be ready, therefore, to move with it. We can not stay behind like the Army and get ready for a great expedition. The Marine Corps can not be ready unless it have (sic) sufficient personnel. This is its vital need just as it is the vital need of the Navy."

<sup>28</sup> Millett, 328.

<sup>29</sup> Clifford, 29.

<sup>30</sup> John A. Lejeune historical file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, Virginia.

<sup>31</sup> Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune, "Memorandum for the Secretary of the Navy" Washington, D.C., 13 October 1925, obtained from the Personal Papers Collection, Marine Corps University Archives, Quantico, Virginia.

<sup>32</sup> Lejeune, *Reminiscences of a Marine*, 470-471.

<sup>33</sup> Marine Corps strength numbers, obtained from the Lejeune Personal Papers Collection, Marine Corps University Archives, Quantico, Virginia.

<sup>34</sup> *The Army Almanac: A Book of Facts Concerning the United States Army*, ed. Gordon R. Young (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Company, 1959), 111.

<sup>35</sup> "Personnel Strength of the U.S. Navy: 1775 to Present", linked from the *Naval Historical Center Home Page* at "Frequently Asked Questions," available from <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faqs65-1.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 January 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Clifford, 30-31.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Perry, *Partners in Command* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2007), 12.

<sup>38</sup> Major General John A. Lejeune, "Preparation", *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 1922 [journal on-line]; available from <http://proquest.umi.com/pdf/55348c37f6093569e2a9ba4312d2a2bc/1203115791/share2/pqimage/irs1/20080215171951598/28784/out.pdf>; Internet; accessed 15 February 2008.

<sup>39</sup> "The Marine Corps League", linked from the *Marine Corps League Home Page* at "About the League," available from <http://www.mcleague.com/mdp/index.php?module=ContentExpress&func=display&ceid=1&MDPROSID=dd8b9d8f385ed679d052248f5a8557d3>; Internet; accessed 15 February 2008.

<sup>40</sup> Lejeune, *Reminiscences of a Marine*, 470-471.

<sup>41</sup> Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1984), 73-75.